



Doctors race to save lives after NYC fire that killed 17

By D. PORTER/B.C. CALVAN and M.L. PRICE
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Doctors raced Monday to save survivors of New York City's deadliest fire in three decades as authorities began investigating how thick smoke could billow through a high-rise, trapping many families inside and killing 17 people, including eight children. Dozens of people were hospitalized, including several in critical condition, after Sunday's fire in the Bronx. Mayor Eric Adams called it an "unspeakable tragedy" at a news conference near the scene. "This tragedy is not going to define us," Adams said. "It is going to show our resili-

ency." Adams lowered the death toll, saying that two fewer people were killed than originally thought. Fire Commissioner Daniel Nigro said patients were taken to seven hospitals and "there was a bit of a double count."

The dead included children as young as 4 years old, said City Council Member Oswald Feliz. Investigators determined that a malfunctioning electric space heater, plugged in on a cold morning, started the fire in the 19-story building.

The flames damaged only a small part of the building, but smoke poured through the apartment's open door and turned stairwells — the



only method of escape in a building too tall for fire escapes — into dark, ash-choked death traps. Adams said the building had self-closing doors and

that investigators were looking into whether a door malfunctioned. "There may have been a maintenance issue with this door. And that is going to

be part of the ... ongoing investigation," the mayor told ABC's "Good Morning America."

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Harrowing tales of escape after fire hits NYC building



Associated Press

By **BOBBY CAINA CALVAN, ANDREW SELSKY and DAVID PORTER** Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Rancid black smoke filling hallways, rising from floor to floor. People tripping and falling as they rushed down darkened stairwells, unable to see. Panic turning to sorrow, as residents who escaped a fire at a high-rise Bronx apartment building learned of neighbors who did not survive.

"We all got out. My friend, her husband didn't make it out. So I'm just thanking God that my family made it," said one resident, Winter Thomas, who escaped from the ninth floor with her

mother, stepfather and siblings.

In all, Sunday's fire killed 19 people, including nine children ages 16 and under, fire officials said.

"It don't make no sense. These is kids I grew up with, kids we went to school with," Thomas said.

On the way down, they sidestepped unresponsive bodies laying on the ground.

Sandra Clayton, 61, heard neighbors screaming in the hallway: "Get out! Get out!" She dashed for the stairs, scooping up her dog named Mocha, a 2-year-old Maltese Shih Tzu.

The smoke smelled of putrid

chemicals, she said. It was already thick and black when she found the stairwell.

She fumbled with her cell-phone flashlight, but was too much in shock. Unable to see, she groped her way down the stairs, soon crowded with other tenants. She described panicked wails and crying that echoed up and down the stairs.

"I just ran down the steps as much as I could but people was falling all over me, screaming," she recounted from St. Barnabas Hospital, where she was treated for smoke inhalation.

She fell three times, sometimes trampled by others trying to escape in the darkness.

At one point, she let go of her dog as she braced herself from a fall.

"I tried feeling for her, but there was so much smoke," she said, her voice growing emotional. "I had to save my own life."

After minutes that seemed to last forever, she found her way out of the building. She gasped for air, wondering in tears about what

happened to Mocha back on the stairs.

"It was so horrific," she said of the ordeal. "I was so scared."

Mocha didn't make it. The dog was later found suffocated by the smoke, she said. As evening fell over the scene, Nicole Anderson counted her blessings. She suspects the fire was already burning when she and her family rode down the elevator to their car.

After driving just a few minutes, the family saw firetrucks barreling down the street, sirens and lights blaring. "I didn't think much of it," said Anderson, 43, who grew up in the building. Soon a neighbor was calling saying their building was on fire. She turned back but could only get as close as a few blocks from her home. She walked the rest of the way.

"It was dark black smoke," she said, coming from a lower floor.

Jose Henriquez, an immigrant from the Dominican Republic, was taking care of two young grandkids and a niece with his wife. At first, he thought the fire

alarm was just an irritating interruption to their morning, since he said false alarms in the building were frequent.

Henriquez said those previous false alarms might've caused residents not to take action as soon as the fire broke out.

As the dark smoke filled the hallway outside, Henriquez shut the door tight and wedged a wet towel in the gap below.

He cracked open a window, letting in the wintry air. In video he shot, the kids can be heard expressing alarm at the smoke, looking out the 10th-floor window as fire trucks rushed to the scene.

Eventually, the family squeezed past ascending firefighters, using dampened COVID-19 masks for protection against the lingering smoke, careful not to slip in pools of water.

On the way down, they passed a dog lying dead on the sooty staircase.

Luis Rosa, also on the 13th floor, had awakened to the fire alarm, also annoyed that it was probably another false alarm. □

Doctors race to save lives after NYC fire that killed 17

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Some people could not escape because of the smoke, Nigro said. Others became incapacitated as they tried to get out. Firefighters found victims on every floor, many in cardiac and respiratory arrest, Nigro said. Limp children were given oxygen after they were carried out. Some who fled had soot-covered faces.

Firefighters continued making rescues even after their air supplies ran out, Adams said. "Their oxygen tanks were empty, and they still pushed through the smoke," he said.

An investigation was underway to determine how the fire spread and whether anything could have been done to prevent or contain the blaze, Nigro said.

Large, new apartment

buildings are required to have sprinkler systems and interior doors that swing shut automatically to contain smoke and deprive fires of oxygen, but those rules do not apply to thousands of the city's older buildings.

The building was equipped with smoke alarms, but several residents said they initially ignored them because alarms were so common in the 120-unit building. "So many of us were used to hearing that fire alarm go off, it was like second nature to us," resident Karen Dejesus said. "Not until I actually saw the smoke coming in the door did I realize it was a real fire, and I began to hear people yelling, 'Help! Help! Help!'"

Dejesus, who was in her two-floor apartment with her son and 3-year-old granddaughter, immedi-

ately called family members and ran to get towels to put under the door. But smoke began coming down her stairs before the 56-year-old resident could get the towels, so the three ran to the back of the apartment.

"It was so scary," she said. "Just the fact that we're in a building that's burning and you don't know how you're going to get out. You don't know if the firefighters are going to get to you in time." Firefighters broke down her door and helped all three out the window and down a ladder to safety. Dejesus clung to her rescuer on the way down.

Hassane Badr told The New York Times that two of his siblings, both children, were killed and that a 25-year-old cousin remained unaccounted for. Badr, 28, waited at Jacobi Medical

Center for news about his 12-year-old brother, who was suffering from serious smoke inhalation. A 5-year-old sister was at another hospital. "I'm thinking like I'm dreaming, this is not true. You hear people crying, my goodness," Badr told the newspaper. "To be honest, I'm not believing it right now."

Badr's family, 11 people from Mali, lived in a three-bedroom apartment on the third floor.

Mahamadou Toure struggled to put his grief into words outside the hospital emergency room where his 5-year-old daughter and the girl's teenage brother died, according to the Daily News.

"Right now my heart is very ...," Toure trailed off while speaking to the New York Daily News. "It's OK. I give it to God." Luis Rosa said

he initially thought it was a false alarm. By the time he opened the door of his 13th-floor apartment, the smoke was so thick he couldn't see down the hallway: "So I said, OK, we can't run down the stairs because if we run down the stairs, we're going to end up suffocating."

"All we could do was wait," he said.

The fire was New York City's deadliest since 1990, when 87 people died in an arson at the Happy Land social club, also in the Bronx. The borough was also the scene of a deadly apartment building fire in 2017 that killed 13 people and a 2007 fire, also started by a space heater, that killed nine. Sunday's fire happened just days after 12 people, including eight children, were killed in a house fire in Philadelphia. □

California's Newsom wants health coverage for all immigrants

By ADAM BEAM

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP)

— California would be the first state to provide health coverage to all immigrants in the country illegally under the budget Gov. Gavin Newsom proposed Monday.

It's part of his effort to address what he termed five of the most populous state's biggest challenges in a \$286.4 billion budget that builds on a surplus projected by the Legislative Analyst to be at least \$31 billion. Newsom's budget proposal uses a much bigger surplus estimate because his administration

uses a different definition of what counts as a surplus. What his administration termed "existential threats" include the surging coronavirus pandemic; wildfires and drought worsened by global warming; homelessness; income inequality including the lack of health insurance for some immigrants; and public safety, including combatting a recent flurry of coordinated smash-and-grab robberies. The most populous state has made great strides in reducing its uninsured population in recent years, but the largest single group left behind under the state's Medicaid program are

low-income residents in the country illegally.

The state began covering immigrants 26 and under in 2019, and those 55 and older last year. Now Newsom wants state lawmakers to cover the remainder, starting no sooner than Jan. 1, 2024.

It wasn't immediately clear if he would phase in the additional health coverage or how he planned to pay for it.

One legislative analysis put the price tag for covering the remaining donut hole of uninsured immigrants at \$2.4 billion per year. Covering those age 50 and up, the most recent expansion, will eventually cost taxpayers about \$1.3 billion per year.

His budget address kicks off months of haggling with his fellow Democrats, who control the state Legislature, talks that will intensify when Newsom presents an updated spending proposal in May.

Some progressive legislative Democrats last week proposed creating in California the nation's first uni-



Associated Press

versal health care system, backed by steep tax hikes that would have to be approved by voters.

Newsom also has pledged to spend \$300 million on boosting law enforcement efforts to combat retail theft and another \$2.7 billion to spend on things like coronavirus testing and hospital staffing.

He additionally on Monday proposed spending \$648 million to back wildland firefighters and buy more helicopters and bulldozers, plus another \$1.2 billion on top of the current budget year's \$1.5 billion for forest management.

Another \$750 million would go to drought relief, on top of the current budget year's \$5.2 billion water package. Also on the environmental front, he pledged to keep reducing California's reliance on fossil fuels.

To confront the state's seemingly intractable homelessness problem, he proposed spending \$2 billion for mental health services, housing, and clearing homeless encampments. That's on top of last year's \$12 billion package. The combination would create a projected 55,000 new housing units and treatment slots. □

Technology sector leads stocks lower again on Wall Street

By DAMIAN J. TROISE and ALEX VEIGA

AP Business Writers

Stocks fell broadly in afternoon trading on Wall Street Monday and bond yields continued rising as investors anticipate moves by the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates.

The S&P 500 fell 1.1% as of 1:42 p.m. Eastern. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 356 points, or 1%, to 35,876 and the Nasdaq fell 1.4%.

Technology stocks again led the way lower. The sector has been the biggest weight on the market through January and is coming off of its worst week since October 2020. Big technology stocks have an outsized influence on the S&P 500 because of their huge size. Coming into the year, the technology sector represented 29.2% of the S&P 500. Advanced Micro Devices shed 3%.

Wall Street is closely watching the Federal Reserve for clues as to how soon it might raise interest rates. The central bank has already said it will accelerate the reduction of its bond purchases, which have helped keep interest rates low. The market now puts the chances of the Fed hiking short-term rates by at least a quarter point

in March at around 78%. A month ago, it was about 36%.

Higher interest rates make the stocks of expensive tech companies and other pricey growth companies less attractive to investors, which is why the sector has been slipping while bond yields rise.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury rose to 1.78% from 1.76% late Friday.

Every sector in the benchmark S&P 500 fell, though sectors that are considered less risky, including utilities and household goods makers, held up better than the rest of the market. Elsewhere in the market a mix of deal news and financial updates moved several large stocks.

Take-Two Interactive, maker of "Grand Theft Auto", plunged 14.9% after announcing a deal to buy Zynga, which makes "Words With Friends" and "Farmville" and jumped 41.7%.

Athletic apparel maker Lululemon Athletica fell 4.8% after warning investors that a surge in virus cases hurt its fourth-quarter financial results. Medical products maker and distributor Cardinal Health fell 7.2% after saying that supply chain problems will hurt profits for its medical segment. □

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Chicago fight with teachers union stretches into 2nd week

By **SOPHIA TAREEN** and
KATHLEEN FOODY
Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — The leader of the Chicago Teachers Union on Monday blamed the city's mayor for a continued standoff over COVID-19 protocols as classes for hundreds of thousands of students were canceled for a fourth day.

CTU President Jesse Sharkey said union and district representatives negotiated until 10 p.m. Sunday but "remain apart on a number of key features" that teachers want before returning to classrooms, including a testing program and triggers to close a school for in-person instruction due to an outbreak.

Sharkey accused Mayor Lori Lightfoot of refusing to compromise on teachers' main priorities and said union leadership can't go back to members with what the mayor's team has offered so far.

"The mayor is being relentless but she's being relentlessly stupid, she's being relentlessly stubborn," he said during a Monday news conference. "She's relentlessly refusing to seek accommodation and we're trying to find a way to get people back in school."

Sharkey's comments came a day after Lightfoot said many teachers had abandoned their students by re-



Associated Press

fusing to teach in-person.

The union wants the option to revert to remote instruction across the 350,000-student district, and most members have refused to teach in-person until there's an agreement, or the latest COVID-19 spike subsides. But Chicago leaders reject districtwide remote learning, saying it's detrimental to students and schools are safe. Instead, Chicago opted to cancel classes as a whole two days after students returned from winter break.

Chicago shares pandemic concerns with other districts nationwide, with more reverting to remote learning

as infections soar and staff members are sidelined. But the situation in union-friendly Chicago has been amplified in a labor dispute that's familiar to families in the mostly low-income Black and Latino district who saw disruptions during a similar safety protocol fight last year, a 2019 strike and a one-day work stoppage in 2016.

The tone of Lightfoot and CPS Chief Executive Officer Pedro Martinez's Sunday evening statement suggested more progress than on Saturday when, shortly after the union made its latest offer public, they said, "CTU leadership, you're not

listening" and vowed not to "relent." The offer she rejected included teachers reporting to schools Monday to distribute laptops for remote learning to temporarily start Wednesday.

Both sides have filed complaints to a state labor board.

Union leaders have accused Lightfoot of bullying, saying that while in-person instruction is better, the pandemic has forced difficult decisions.

"The mayor's saying she's going to be relentless in prosecuting a case, but the mayor's not a prosecutor and I'm not a criminal being prosecuted," Shar-

key said. "Our members are not people who have done anything wrong."

School leaders have touted a \$100 million safety plan, which includes air purifiers in each classroom. Roughly 91% of staff are vaccinated and masks are required indoors.

Since the start of the academic year, some individual classrooms have temporarily switched to remote instruction when there are infections. But in rejecting a widescale return to remote learning, city health officials argue most students directed to quarantine because of possible classroom exposure don't get COVID-19. The district is piloting a "test to stay" program to cut isolation times.

The union argues that the measures fall short, especially considering the omicron-fueled surge that has upended the return to work and class. It has also criticized the district for not enrolling enough students in a testing program and an unreliable database of COVID-19 infections.

Several district families, represented by the conservative Liberty Justice Center in Chicago, filed a lawsuit in Cook County over the closures last week, while more than 5,000 others have signed a petition urging a return to in-person instruction. □



Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The pilot of a small plane averted death twice in under five minutes on Sunday, first when he crash-landed onto railroad tracks, then when Los Angeles police rescued him just before a commuter train smashed into the aircraft.

Bodycam video showed

the officers working furiously to disentangle the bloodied pilot from the cockpit of the crumpled Cessna 172. "Go! Go! Go! Go! Go!" someone yelled as the officers dragged the man away seconds before the Metrolink train, its horn blaring, barreled through the plane.

Pilot rescued from wreckage in LA moments before train hits

The plane crashed shortly after takeoff at 2:10 p.m. from Whiteman Airport in the San Fernando Valley community of Pacoima, according to the Federal Aviation Administration. The timestamp on a police officer's body camera showed that the train hit the plane at 2:15 p.m.

The plane had landed on the tracks at a railroad crossing just blocks from the Los Angeles Police Department's Foothill Division station, and officers arrived at the crash scene almost immediately.

CBSN Los Angeles said four

officers rescued the pilot and dragged him onto the pavement.

The station identified them as Damien Castro, Christopher Aboyte, Robert Sherock and Sgt. Joseph Cavestany.

It was unclear how much time passed before authorities realized the plane was on the tracks, or exactly when police notified the railroad, but the officers realized there was no time to spare.

"I had requested Metrolink to cease all train activity, but apparently that didn't happen," Cavestany said.

The male pilot was the only person on board and was taken to a hospital for treatment, the Los Angeles Fire Department said. He was not identified and no other injuries were reported.

"Seeing what happened, I'm grateful to be alive. I'm grateful the pilot survived as well," Sherock said.

Metrolink subsequently halted train service and road traffic was detoured in the area about 20 miles (32 kilometers) northwest of downtown Los Angeles. The FAA and the National Transportation Safety Board will investigate. □

Hurricane Ida, Europe floods made 2021 costly for disasters

By **FRANK JORDANS**

Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Damage wrought by Hurricane Ida in the U.S. state of Louisiana and the flash floods that hit Europe last summer helped make 2021 one of the most expensive years for natural disasters, reinsurance company Munich Re said Monday. The company's annual report put the overall economic losses from natural disasters worldwide last year at \$280 billion, making it the fourth-costliest after 2011, the year a massive earthquake and tsunami struck Japan.

Insured losses in 2021 amounted to \$120 billion, the second-highest after 2017, when hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria hit the Americas, according to Munich Re. More than a third of those insured losses last year were caused by Ida (\$36 billion) and the July floods in Europe (\$13 billion). Almost 10,000 died as a result of a natural disaster in 2021, comparable to the death toll in recent



Associated Press

years, Munich Re said. The company warned that studies showed a link between global warming and natural disasters.

"The images of natural disasters in 2021 are disturbing," said Torsten Jeworrek, a member Munich Re's board of management.

"Climate research increas-

ingly confirms that extreme weather has become more likely," he said.

"Societies need to urgently adapt to increasing weather risks and make climate protection a priority."

Satellite measurements show 2021 was one of the warmest years on record, with the annual average

temperature 1.1-1.2 degrees Celsius higher than the pre-industrial period from 1850-1900, the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service said Monday.

Europe experienced its warmest summer on record, it said.

Scientists say that higher

temperatures can cause the air to absorb more moisture, which can then lead to more extreme rainfall such as that seen in western Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands last summer. The resulting floods devastated whole villages and killed more than 220 people in what insurance companies said was the costliest natural disaster Europe has ever seen.

"Even though events cannot automatically be attributed to climate change, analysis of the changes over decades provides plausible indications of a connection with the warming of the atmosphere and the oceans," said Ernst Rauch, Munich Re's chief climate scientist, adding that adapting to increasing risks would be "a challenge." The company noted that not all natural disasters are climate-related, citing volcanic eruptions in Indonesia and Spain's Canary Islands, and earthquakes such as the one that hit Japan in February. □

Nearly 8,000 detained in Kazakhstan over violent protests

By **DASHA LITVINOVA**

Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Nearly 8,000 people in Kazakhstan were detained by police during protests that descended into violence last week and marked the worst unrest the former Soviet nation has faced since gaining independence 30 years ago, authorities said Monday.

President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev on Monday described the unrest that followed initially peaceful protests against rising energy prices as a "terrorist aggression" against the mineral-rich Central Asian nation of 19 million and dismissed reports that authorities targeted peaceful demonstrators as "disinformation." Kazakhstan's Interior Ministry reported that 7,939 people have been detained across the country. The National Security Committee, Kazakhstan's counterintelligence and anti-terrorism agency, said Monday the

situation has "stabilized and is under control."

Monday was declared a day of mourning for the victims of the violent unrest, which the health ministry says killed 164 people, including three children.

The demonstrations began on Jan. 2 over a near-doubling of prices for vehicle fuel and quickly spread across the country, with political slogans reflecting wider discontent with Kazakhstan's authoritarian government.

In a concession, the government announced a 180-day price cap on vehicle fuel and a moratorium on utility rate increases. As the unrest mounted, the ministerial cabinet resigned and the president replaced Nursultan Nazarbayev, former longtime leader of Kazakhstan, as head of the National Security Council.

One of the main slogans of the past week's protests, "Old man out," was a reference to Nazarbayev, who

served as president from Kazakhstan's independence until he resigned in 2019 and anointed Tokayev as his successor. Nazarbayev had retained substantial power at the helm of the National Security Council.

Despite the concessions, the protests turned extremely violent for several days. In Almaty, Kazakhstan's largest city, the protesters set the city hall on fire and stormed and briefly seized the airport. For several days, sporadic gunfire was reported in the city streets.

The authorities declared a state of emergency over the unrest, and Tokayev requested help from the Collective Security Treaty Organization, a Russia-led military alliance of six former Soviet states. The group has authorized sending about 2,500 mostly Russian troops to Kazakhstan as peacekeepers.

Tokayev has said the dem-



Associated Press

onstrations were instigated by "terrorists" with foreign backing, although the protests have shown no obvious leaders or organization. On Friday, he said he ordered police and the military to shoot to kill "terrorists" involved in the violence. In a statement Monday, Kazakhstan's Foreign Ministry said the peaceful protests "were hijacked by terrorist, extremist and criminal groups," including radical Islamist fighters with com-

bat experience. Speaking Monday at an extraordinary virtual summit of CSTO, Tokayev promised to reveal to the world "additional evidence" of a "terrorist aggression" against Kazakhstan. He stressed that the demands of peaceful protesters have been "heard and met by the state," and the unrest that followed involved "groups of armed militants" whose goal was to overthrow the government. □

Dutch king swears in new ruling coalition, Rutte's 4th



Associated Press

By **MIKE CORDER**
Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte embarked on a fourth term Monday, leading a coalition that took office amid a nationwide coronavirus lockdown and policy challenges ranging from climate change and housing shortages to the future of agriculture.

King Willem-Alexander formally swore in the new government at a socially-distanced ceremony in the ballroom of the Noordeinde Palace in The Hague. The ceremony came after a record-breaking coalition formation process following the March 17 general election that highlighted deep divisions in the splintered Dutch political landscape. Rutte, 54, has already led three coalitions and is now set to become the Netherlands' longest-serving prime minister despite only narrowly surviving a no-confidence motion in parliament in April. Willem-Alexander congratulated the new ministers and wished them "good health and wisdom" in their new jobs.

Among the new faces are Health and Sport Minister Ernst Kuipers, a physician who moves into politics after holding senior positions in the health care sector, including leading a national organization that facilitated the spreading out of

patients among hospitals amid the pandemic.

Also new to Dutch politics is Robbert Dijkgraaf, a respected academic who was named Education Minister and returns to the Netherlands after serving since 2012 as director of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey.

The swearing-in of the new government also comes almost a year to the day since Rutte and his entire Cabinet resigned to accept political responsibility for a scandal involving the nation's tax office that wrongly labeled as fraudsters thousands of parents who claimed childcare benefits. Even so, Rutte will lead a coalition made up of the same four parties that quit to end his third term. His fourth administration is made up of Rutte's conservative People's Party for Freedom and Democracy, together with the centrist, pro-European D66, the center-right Christian Democratic Appeal and centrist Christian Union. Together, they command a narrow majority in the 150-seat lower house of Dutch parliament, but are in the minority in the upper house. For the first time in Dutch political history, half of the senior Cabinet ministers are women. One of them, D66 leader Sigrid Kaag, the new finance minister, took

part in the swearing-in by videoconference because she is isolating after testing positive for COVID-19.

"It's a slightly different start than I'd hoped for, but I am going to begin full of energy," Kaag tweeted Sunday. In a policy blueprint published late last year, the new government outlined plans to cut taxes, offer almost free childcare for working parents, bring back grants for higher education students and a plan to build about 100,000 new homes each year.

The ambitious agenda will cost billions in this country, which is long known for its fiscal frugality.

The new coalition also has vowed to work to win back public trust in government that has been eroded by scandals, polarization, frustration in parts of society at measures to tackle the pandemic and at the drawn-out coalition negotiations.

Rutte said the coalition would seek to work together with "society and with our political colleagues" in parliament to implement reforms.

He has yet to convince everybody. Outside the palace, a protester sang: "Rutte take your garbage with you," as part of a protest that got underway as the new Cabinet posed for a picture on the steps outside the palace. □



Associated Press

Italy targets the unvaccinated with new virus restrictions

By **NICOLE WINFIELD**
Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Italy targeted the unvaccinated with a host of new coronavirus restrictions Monday, with proof of vaccination or recovery from a recent infection required to enter public transport, coffee shops, hotels, gyms and other everyday activities.

The new "super" health pass requirement, which eliminates the ability to show just a negative test to gain access to services, comes as many Italians return to work and school after the Christmas and New Year's holidays. It came as COVID-19 infections are soaring past 100,000 per day in Italy. The government has responded to the omicron-fueled wave of infections by passing new restrictions aimed at encouraging vaccine holdouts to get the jabs or be increasingly shut out of recreational and even essential activities, such as taking a bus or subway to work.

Italians have by and large supported the restrictions, which in recent months have also included outdoor mask mandates and a standard health pass to get into workplaces. Many welcomed the new restrictions, which were being enforced Monday by police fanning out at train stations to check passengers' vaccine status and make sure they were wearing the more protective Ffp2 face masks, which were required on public transport as of Monday. "I'm happy that they are controlling

everywhere," said Carola, Pasqualotto, a member of the Imperi sport center where the front desk was checking members' vaccination status. "I am in favor of mandatory vaccines for all." Premier Mario Draghi, though, has faced criticism for a related decision to mandate vaccinations for anyone 50 and over starting next month. Critics say the fine for noncompliance, which starts at 100 euros (\$113), makes the mandate toothless. Draghi is presiding over a press conference later Monday to explain the new measures. Italy, where the coronavirus outbreak first erupted in Europe in February 2020, has fully vaccinated 86% of the over-12 population, and nearly 75% of those who are eligible have received a booster. But 2 million people out of Italy's population of 60 million are currently positive, impacting essential services. School districts have complained they don't have enough teachers to reopen, since so many are positive or in quarantine. Some train service has been curtailed because of labor shortages. Doctors' associations, meanwhile, have said the surge is hitting Italy's hospitals hard. Some 16,000 COVID-19 patients are in the hospital and 1,600 are in intensive care, but that is well short of the 4,000 people in intensive care units during the height of the first wave. Officials say around two-thirds of those now hospitalized are unvaccinated. □

India starts booster shots for vulnerable amid omicron surge

By ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL

AP Science Writer

NEW DELHI (AP) — Health-care and front-line workers along with people above age 60 with health problems lined up Monday at vaccination centers across India to receive a third dose as infections linked to the omicron variant surge. The doses, which India is calling a "precautionary" shot instead of a booster, were given as new confirmed coronavirus infections rocketed to over 179,000 on Monday, nearly an eightfold increase in a week. Hospitalizations, while still relatively low, are also beginning to rise in large, crowded cities such as New Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata.

Dr. Ravindra Kumar Dewan, who heads the National Institute of Tuberculosis and Respiratory Diseases in New Delhi, queued up for his shot. He said boosters are a "significant step" because there are still many unknowns about the omicron variant. "Yesterday, the mortality ... has increased in Delhi. So, whether our health care system will get overwhelmed or not is yet to be seen," he said.

India is better prepared now than it was last year when the delta variant overwhelmed hospitals. When cases spiked in March last year, not even 1% of its population of nearly 1.4 billion was fully vaccinated. India's creaky medical infrastructure meant millions likely died.

Since then, the government has bolstered health-care, built oxygen plants and added beds to hospitals. About 47% of the population is now fully vaccinated and many have antibodies from previous infections. This may provide "hybrid immunity" — a combination of immunity from previous infections and vaccines — comparable to boosters, said Dr. Chandrakant Lahariya, an Indian epidemiologist.

Although the omicron variant seems to cause less severe illness than the delta variant, India's massive population, crowded cit-



Associated Press

ies, and understaffed hospitals mean that health systems may still become strained. Elections may further spread the more infectious variant, allowing it to infect vulnerable people that previous variants didn't reach. But the biggest fear is that hospitals will be overwhelmed because of sick medical personnel, said Dr. Vineeta Bal, an immunologist at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research in the city of Pune. "There would be beds (in hospitals) but no people to take care of individuals," she said.

India's hospitals are short-staffed at the best of times and health workers are distributed unevenly across states. Already, hospitals are becoming crippled as hundreds of health workers fall sick with the variant. Federal hospitals have been forced to relax quarantine rules and some have stopped routine services.

"Every third doctor is either symptomatic or positive. There is an acute shortage of staff. And there is an acute crisis," said Dr. Anuj Aggarwal at New Delhi's Safdarjung Hospital, one of India's largest government hospitals.

At the Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences in Ranchi city, the capital of Jharkhand state, a quarter of the 800 health workers were down with mild infections, said Dr. Prabhat

Kumar, in charge of COVID-19 treatment there.

The delay in providing boosters could be costly, said Dr. T. Jacob John, former chief of virology at Christian Medical College in southern India. He said that having to administer third shots as a surge threatens to overwhelm hospitals would put an additional burden on health workers. The belated boosters are being given to high-risk groups who were among

the first to receive vaccines last year and whose immunity may be waning. Unlike other countries, where many people receive a different vaccine as a booster, most Indians will receive the same type, in most cases the AstraZeneca vaccine produced by India's Serum Institute, the world's largest vaccine maker. The benefits of this are "relatively limited," and India had been hoping to have more vaccines available so it

could mix the booster shots Lahariya said.

"India does not have that kind of choice," he said.

Serum Institute's AstraZeneca vaccine accounts for nearly 90% of all doses that have been administered in India, even though emergency approvals have been given to eight vaccines.

Some Indian vaccine makers have had manufacturing woes, while others such as Moderna and Johnson & Johnson have asked for protection from lawsuits over side effects, which India has been reluctant to grant.

India's vaccine drive has also been patchy. Around 30% of the population over the age of 60 wasn't fully vaccinated as of the end of 2021 and vaccinations for those below 18, about a third of India's population, started just last week.

The rate of vaccinations also varies vastly among states, from 75% in northern Himachal Pradesh state to 31% in eastern Jharkhand state, among India's poorest.

"These gaps will certainly get exposed," said Bal, the immunologist. □

Chile starts fourth vaccine dose as coronavirus cases rise



Associated Press

SANTIAGO, Chile (AP) — Chile is implementing a fourth vaccination dose for some citizens as the number of daily coronavirus infections rises.

President Sebastián Piñera was present on Monday when two adults with im-

munosuppression problems received a fourth vaccination for COVID-19 at a Santiago hospital.

Chile is applying a fourth dose early because the current daily infection rate of 4,000 coronavirus cases could rise to 10,000 or

more, Piñera said. Vaccination with a fourth dose for the immunosuppressed will end on Feb. 7. Then the program will turn to people over 55 years old who had a third dose at least six months ago. Chile, which has 19 million people, had planned to start with the fourth dose in February. The sharp increase in infections in neighboring Argentina, Bolivia and Peru contributed to its decision to advance the process.

Israel approved a fourth vaccine dose for people most vulnerable to COVID-19, an official said on Dec. 30, becoming one of the first countries to do so as it braced for a wave of infections fueled by the omicron variant. □



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Adaptation of check-in time for all group color codes

ORANJESTAD – As informed by Aruba Airport Authority N.V. (AAA), the company that manages and operates Aeropuerto Internacional Reina Beatrix (AUA Airport) as of December 1, 2021, all US departing passengers are allowed access to the check-in terminal based on groups and color codes for each group at the airport as part of the "Passenger Flow Control" for all passengers to the USA.

Further adaptations have been made to make the process more agile and

to better indicate the 3 hour time frame between scheduled departure time and allowed check-time. The time frame for check-in for the YELLOW group has now been adapted to be between 08:00 – 12:00 hrs (8 AM – 12 noon). The time frame for the BLUE group has also been further adapted to now be allowed to check-in between between 12:00 and 14:00 hrs (12 noon and 2 PM). The ORANGE check-in time frame has also been adapted to now be between 14:00 hrs and 16:00 hrs (2 PM – 4 PM).

ARUBA AIRPORT Departure Check-In Times Quadrant by Group			
GROUP	YELLOW	BLUE	ORANGE
DEPARTURE TIME	Between 11:00 - 15:00	Between 15:00 - 17:00	Between 17:00 - 18:00
CHECK-IN	Between 08:00 - 12:00	Between 12:00 - 14:00	Between 14:00 - 16:00*

Note: For check-in times, please maintain this at 3 hours prior to scheduled departure time
For example: scheduled departure time is 13:00 hrs = check-in time 10:00 hrs
scheduled departure time is 15:00 hrs = check-in time 12:00 hrs
scheduled departure time is 17:00 hrs = check-in time 14:00 hrs
scheduled departure time is 18:00 hrs = check-in time 15:00 hrs*

*For flights that are scheduled to depart between 17:00 hrs and 18:00 hrs, those check-in counters will close 60 to 75 minutes before the scheduled departure time. As such code ORANGE has a check-in time frame between 14:00 hrs – 16:00 hrs (2PM – 4PM).

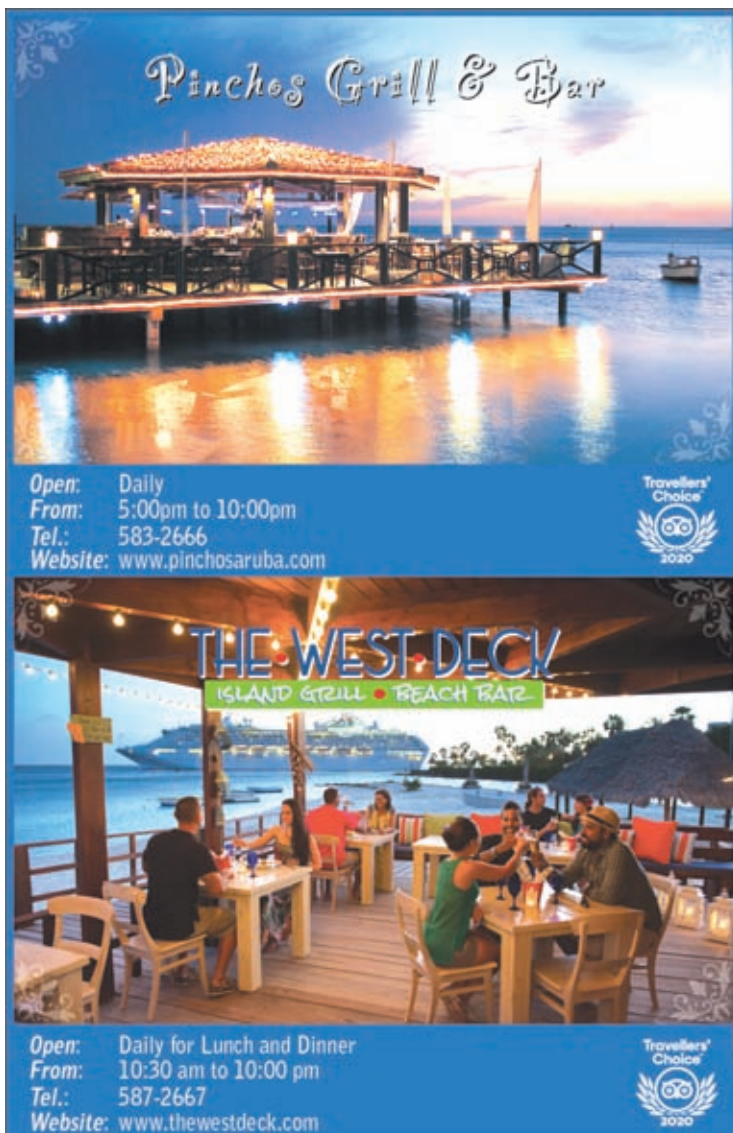
Period: December 1, 2021 – March 12, 2022
If flight is delayed, please maintain your scheduled departure time

The Passenger Flow Control concept entails that passenger are allowed to enter the check in facilities based on separate groups (Yellow, Blue and Orange) established by the scheduled airline departure times. Passengers will thus receive a dedicated timeslot to enter the terminal as indicated in table below.

This dedicated timeslot is determined for visitors based on the information provided in the ED (Electronic Disembarkation) Card where information on the departure flight will also have to be submitted. Residents travelling out of Aruba to the US should take their scheduled departure time into account to deter-

mine at what time they are allowed to check-in (not earlier than 3 hours before that time of departure).

AUA Airport will have ambassadors at the entry doors to actively control the time slots per passenger. Early passengers will have to wait outside for their correct time slot. □



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'Your Point of View'

ORANJESTAD — Aruba Today encourages you to share your opinion with our readers through our newest column 'Your Point of view'.

Was there a certain situation that you think might have been handled differently? Or perhaps a really nice experience you went through? Maybe you want to just let our readers know how your overall experience was on the island while vacationing here despite the crisis. Let's exchange ideas and experiences related to Aruba.

Send us 'Your Point of View' with your name and where you are from to news@arubatoday.com.

PS. Article will be screened prior to publication. No defamation of people or businesses will be allowed. Only constructive criticism/feedback.

For today we received a lovely quote



from Gregory Noone.
He wrote:

"The young man who works at the California Lighthouse is wonderful! He greets all with a smile, always willing to answer questions and seems to totally love his job!

We've gone twice in the last two years... we look forward to seeing him on our next visit to Aruba." □

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Article by Etnia Nativa

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Malmok site

Episode CXXXVIII - 138

NOORD — Every week we share the most interesting and revealing stories in our articles regarding the Aruba you love, a beautiful destination to explore while finding out more over amazing events that will enlighten and spice up your vacation.

In the proses of discovering the islands landscapes and topography you will reach Malmok area, which offers a perfect and relaxing coast line and beaches. During your drive around you will probably notice and differentiate three basic geological formations: one is a hilly part; second an undulating part and a third part consisting of limestone which embraces these two zones and forming also the coast line.

The picture shows you how calm and peaceful you can swim in the Malmok area. Now for those who wants to know more about this beautiful and archaic site. There is a Malmok Paleo Lithic cemetery. This Stone Age site is situated at a distance of 200 meters south and 300 meters north of the sea parallel to the former Salina or salt-lake. The site shares its sandy subsoil with the salt-lake. This limestone is part of the Lower terrace formation, formed during a period of a rising sea level. Most commonly forms in clear, warm, shallow marine waters. It is usually an organic sedimentary rock that forms from the accumulation of shell, coral, algae Etc. Most of the area in the Malmok site is flat terrain near the Salina. However some of dunes exist in the west-



ern part of the site. Rock markings and Turtle shell covered graves were found in the dunes slightly above the plain. This means that the dunes were already present in the period at the burial activities took Malmok place. The graves in their relations ship to the present surface suggest that the surface was essentially the same in prehistory as it is today. The Neo Lithic agro ceramic tribes also occupied this abundant and resource full area, which marine supply must have sustain their peaceful existence. Relatives buried their dead's in the ground near their settlement some with special gifts as social status distinctions in their grave. However others were found with seeds to be planted in the afterlife while a few with any traceable gifts at all. During rituals corpse where first buried

in the ground, after a several months or even years, the bones were excavated, cleaned with meticulous care. These skeletal remains subsequently obtain their permanent resting place in a fairly small urn or vessel. Natives gave great care and devotion to their dead's. So you must imagine that people since thousands of years where very grateful to have enjoyed the pleasure of this paradisiatic island for its clear, calm and generous nature. □

Did you say that you love Aruba its origins and cultural heritage? Than this private encounter with our columnist anthropologist is just as you. Sessions created in a gorgeous setting for visitor with special interests. Appointment is required. etnianativa03@gmail.com or Whatsapp us 297 592 2702 for a private reservation.

Bohemian Restaurant & Bar, The Story: French Nomads in Culinary Avant-Garde



Like nomads travel from place to place to find fresh pasture for their livestock, the Nataf family –father Victor with sons David and Gregory - faithfully followed their nose for good food. As young boys, they indulged in their grandparent's culinary joie-de-vivre in the South of France. Ticked by the palette of excellent dishes prepared in their mid-seventies' restaurant in the Alps of France and filled with exquisite taste of their other restaurants in the beautiful island of Porquerolles near St Tropez that

made it to a ranking of 13/20 in the Gault Millau restaurant grading. To the Natafs, food is a bohemian experience_ unconventional, eclectic and off the beaten track. Welcome to Bohemian Aruba!

A Grande entrée through a huge, wooden, Moroccan-style door takes you into a foodies Garden of Eden. Big trees stand tall and proudly, lit with hanging lanterns creating a green and romantic lush paradise. There's a playful setting of different-styled tables, including

seating under a Colombian Rattan tipi tent, complete the feel of let go alias laissez-faire. The cool bar blinks to New York loft style, think industrial bold. Waiters with hip suspenders and berets add a hint of French flair while lounge music fills the air. The décor is designed by David himself.

David Nataf - Owner

"Thoughts of finger licking dishes fill my mind thinking of my youth. The smell of fresh-baked croissants and chocolate bread hand made by my uncle's brother in law's father "the baker". The restaurant's kitchen fridge stuffed with the most exquisite dishes that my brother and I consumed secretly after a night out to the frustration of the chef. We were young boys eating away the night with foie gras and loup de mer local branzino." Tongue melting fondue and raclette, wood oven pizzas with fresh Emmentaler cheese and hand-picked champignons founded his foodie character. Add this to the time he spent at the grandparents' house in the vineyards with fruits, veggies, poultry, and game within hand's reach. What was missing was bought at the weekly farmers market. "I grew up with the farm-to-table concept."

Le Magic

The family magic is translated through David into Bohemian. Starters like Vitello Tonnato, le Ceviche, homemade Foie Gras Terrine or Escargots "A la Bourguignonne" tickle your taste buds. For entrees Whole Shrimps Flambe with Cognac, Grilled 10oz Angus Rib Eye Steak "Maître d'Hôtel" or Braised Lamb Shank ignite passion in your soul. Spicy Moroccan Mahi-Mahi Kebab with chickpea hummus and ratatouille crumble, Paella made with their own fish broth filled with chicken seafood and chorizo are other culinary delights but there is much more. Wines are imported directly from France regions, as is the champagne. Italian, Spanish, American and Australian choices



complete the list.

Raving reviews on a continuous basis prove that Bohemian has got it! Every Wednesday there is Live Flamenco with Angela Croes, on Thursdays you will enjoy the beautiful live sounds of Angela's violin and on Friday's and Saturday's go with the beat of electro lounge. Live salsa music can be enjoyed on Sunday's.

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For reservations call +297 280 8448 or mail reservations@bohemia-aruba.com or book through the website bohemainaruba.com. □



Grand Theft Auto maker buys FarmVille company in \$12.7B deal

By **MICHELLE CHAPMAN**

AP Business Writer

Take-Two Interactive, maker of "Grand Theft Auto" and "Red Dead Redemption," is buying Zynga, maker of "FarmVille" and "Words With Friends," in a cash-and-stock deal valued at about \$12.7 billion.

The acquisition announced Monday would wed a powerhouse in console gaming, Take-Two, with a mobile gaming company with an almost cult-like following. Zynga shareholders will receive \$3.50 in cash and \$6.36 in shares of Take-Two common stock for each share of Zynga outstanding stock at closing. The transaction is valued at \$9.86 per share of Zynga common stock.

"This strategic combination brings together our best-in-class console and PC franchises, with a market-leading, diversified mobile publishing platform that has a



Associated Press

rich history of innovation and creativity," Take-Two Chairman and CEO Strauss Zelnick said in a prepared statement. He will retain those roles when the companies become one.

Take-Two anticipates the deal will help bring about mobile versions of some of its console and personal computer based games. Take-Two said Monday it anticipates approximately

\$100 million in annual cost savings within the first two years after the transaction is complete.

Zynga CEO Frank Gibeau and its president of publishing, Bernard Kim, will over-

see the integration and day-to-day operations of the combined Zynga and T2 Mobile Games business, which will operate under the Zynga brand as its own label within the Take-Two.

Take-Two will also expand its board to 10 members upon closing, adding two members from Zynga's board.

The transaction includes a go-shop provision, giving Zynga 45 days to hear alternative proposals.

The deal is expected to close during the first quarter of Take-Two's fiscal 2023, ending June 30. It still needs approval of both Take-Two and Zynga stockholders. It has received approval from both companies' boards.

Shares of Zynga Inc., based in San Francisco, jumped 52.5% to \$9.15. Shares of Take-Two Interactive Software, Inc., based in New York City, fell 8.7% to \$150.25. □

Incoming CEO at Southwest Air faces numerous challenges

By **DAVID KOENIG**

AP Airlines Writer

DALLAS (AP) — Robert Jordan will inherit a long list of challenges when he becomes the sixth CEO of Southwest Airlines, which is struggling to recover from a pandemic that battered its finances and left it a much smaller company.

Southwest had never lost money over an entire year in its half-century history until 2020, when it lost \$3 billion. The Dallas-based carrier is likely to have finished 2021 in the black — it will report results later this month — thanks to more than \$1.1 billion in federal pandemic relief.

After thousands of employees left in 2020, staffing shortages contributed to high numbers of canceled and delayed flights on Southwest last summer and again in October. The airline is now on a hiring spree to catch up.

Jordan joined Southwest in 1988 and rose through a series of finance and strategy jobs, including overseeing the \$1.4 billion acquisition of AirTran Airways in 2011. In June, Southwest

announced that Jordan would succeed Gary Kelly, who is retiring as CEO on Feb. 1 after 17 years leading the airline.

Jordan talked to The Associated Press shortly before Christmas about those flight disruptions, whether Southwest will charge for checking bags, and what kind of legacy he wants to leave. The comments have been edited for length.

Q. You've got your work cut out for you. What are you going to focus on first?

A. The company is not broken, but ... I think there are some things that we can do to — I've used the word modernize. I don't know if that's a good word or not because it's not like we're behind, but I do think we need to work on, for example, our operational tools. I don't know that (employees) have all the tools to manage the complex company that we are.

Q. Do you mean the way that you reschedule passengers and crews?

A. It could be a whole variety of things. When you're in irregular operations (such as cancellations and de-

lays caused by weather or other factors), I've got aircraft out of place and customers out of place, and this aircraft needs to end up in that maintenance base. There are probably tools that we can use to more quickly notice problems and provide solutions.

Q. What else?

A. I think we have a terrific customer experience. But (I) think about things like, is our Wi-Fi as reliable as it needs to be? I'm not sure that it is. Do we need to think about things like whether power (outlets for passengers) on the aircraft are important? Can you do everything that you need to do as a customer to self-serve for yourself on your phone? Am I going to drastically change the airline? I don't think so, but I do think that there are areas that we can improve.

Q. What about bag fees, change fees and your open-seating system? Any changes coming?

A. No. We're known for doing things that make sense for our customers. No bag fees, no change fees make perfect sense. It's very hard



Associated Press

for me to imagine that we would go to assigned seating. There is absolutely no work on rethinking any of those things. But I do put (assigned seating) sort of in the never-say-never bucket.

Q. You are hiring. How long until you're fully staffed?

A. We were hiring about 5,000 this fall, and if you remember, we had about 5,000 that took early retirement (in 2020 and 2021), so we're making really good progress. It is harder than normal. We get plenty of applications, we just don't get as many applications for open jobs as we used

to. We're hiring even more in 2022, which is why I suspect it takes into the summer to get caught up here.

Q. What's happening to wages?

A. The market for wages is moved and it feels like it's continuing to move. I don't know if there is a such thing as a minimum wage anymore because there is a market wage. It feels like \$15 (an hour) has become \$18 and \$18 may (become) \$20. It's hard to know is when you equalize and when that stops. I think you're going to continue to see wage pressure for a while. □

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Knave
- 7 Do origami
- 11 Rio Grande city
- 12 Lake near Buffalo
- 13 Preserve immediately after harvesting
- 15 Rose part
- 16 Golf pegs
- 18 Suit piece
- 21 Munich mister
- 22 Sentence ender
- 24 Firefighter's tool
- 25 Gimlet base
- 26 Silent assent
- 27 Bit of strategy
- 29 Karate award
- 30 Asterisk
- 31 Uses oars
- 32 Sword metal
- 34 It's a 5 on the Beaufort scale
- 40 Part to play
- 41 Infertile
- 42 Shout
- 43 Was a noisy sleeper

DOWN

- 1 Game caller
- 2 Maximum amount
- 3 Relaxing retreat
- 4 Cartoon ghost
- 5 Fire remnants
- 6 Barn area
- 7 Tentative inquiry
- 8 Mine yield
- 9 Designer Claiborne
- 10 Ruby of films
- 14 Black bird
- 16 Alamo setting
- 17 Put up
- 19 Muscular power
- 20 Shop equipment
- 21 Bowler, for one
- 22 Snapshot
- 23 Banned pesticide
- 25 Circumference
- 28 Fez feature
- 29 Lively dance
- 31 Showed over
- 33 Wanes
- 34 Make tempura
- 35 Surgeon eggs
- 36 Building wing
- 37 Blunder
- 38 Last letter
- 39 Conclude

W	A	N	D	A	S	P	A	T	S
A	P	O	R	T	L	I	L	A	C
G	E	N	O	A	E	X	T	R	A
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Yesterday's answer

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11						12			
13						14			
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27			28				29		
	30					31			
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34	35	36					37	38	39
40					41				
42					43				

1-11

AXYDLBAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

1-11

CRYPTOQUOTE

BWU TJUPB PJB BS CUPJO
YIFW ZV BS IONUJBPQU P
CZBBCU PR P BZYU.

— ASWO CSFQU

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: WE ENACT MANY LAWS THAT MANUFACTURE CRIMINALS, AND THEN THE FEW THAT PUNISH THEM. — ALLEN TUCKER

Bob Saget, beloved TV dad of 'Full House,' dead at 65

By LYNN ELBER

AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Bob Saget, the actor-comedian known for his role as beloved single dad Danny Tanner on the sitcom "Full House" and as the wise-cracking host of "America's Funniest Home Videos," died while on a stand-up tour. He was 65.

Deputies in Orange County, Florida, were called Sunday about an "unresponsive man" in a hotel room at the Ritz-Carlton in Orlando and found Saget dead, according to a sheriff's statement on Twitter. Detectives found "no signs of foul play or drug use in this case."

Saget was in Florida as part of his "I Don't Do Negative Comedy Tour." After warm audience receptions to his gigs Friday in Orlando and Saturday in the Ponte Vedra Beach resort area, he celebrated online.

"I'm back in comedy like I was when I was 26. I guess I'm finding my new voice and loving every moment of it," he posted Saturday on Instagram.

Fellow comedians and friends praised Saget not only for his wit, but his kindness.

"I am broken. I am gutted. I am in complete and utter shock. I will never ever have another friend like him," wrote John Stamos,



Associated Press

who co-starred with Saget on "Full House." "I love you so much Bobby."

"I have no words. Bob was one of the best humans beings I've ever known in my life. I loved him so much," said Candace Cameron Bure, who played Saget's daughter on "Full House."

"In often a ruthless business he was historically not just hilarious but more importantly one of the kindest human beings I ever met in my career," actor Richard Lewis wrote on Twitter.

In a statement Sunday, Saget's family members said they are "devastated to confirm that our beloved Bob passed away today.... Though we ask for privacy at this time, we invite you to join us in remembering the love and laughter that Bob brought to the world."

Saget the stand-up showed his flip side with what be-

came a much-talked-about cameo in the 2005 documentary "The Aristocrats" — in which 100 comics riffed on the world's dirtiest joke — that revealed his notoriously filthy sense of humor.

Raunchy comedy wasn't part of his long-running network TV shows. He hosted the family friendly "America's Funniest Home Videos" and played the squeaky clean widower and dad to three young girls on "Full House," the ABC sitcom that also brought fame to Olsen twins Mary-Kate and Ashley when it debuted in 1987.

"Bob was the most loving, compassionate and generous man. We are deeply saddened that he is no longer with us but know that he will continue to be by our side to guide us as gracefully as he always has," the Olsens said in a joint statement.

The show's popularity didn't deter critics, some calling it cheesy and others deeming it unreal. Saget, as amiable and droll in an interview as he was on TV screens, took the brickbats in stride.

"Full House" was a loving kind of show but obviously over the top. It had its heightened reality, a glossy Willy Wonka quality to it," he told The Associated Press in a 2001 interview.

That year, Saget took another pass at playing a widowed dad with winsome kids on the short-lived sitcom "Raising Dad." □

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This year, resolve to leave no gift card unused

By **LIZ WESTON** of **NerdWallet**

Years ago, a friend who needed cash sold me a \$100 Nordstrom gift card. I wish I knew where the heck I put it. Gift cards are a popular holiday solution, especially recently, as supply chain disruptions and shipping delays have made gift buying more challenging. Most gift cards are spent within a year, but billions of dollars remain unspent and about 1% to 2% of gift card dollars typically go unused, according to Amy Dunkelmann, vice president of research operations for Mercator Advisory Group, a global payments consultant. This year, my New Year's resolution is to find and deploy every single gift card lurking in our household by Jan. 15, which is this year's National Use Your Gift Card Day. For help, I turned to two gift card experts who offered suggestions on how to keep track of cards and use them to the best advantage.

MAKE A PLAN FOR THE CARDS YOU WON'T USE

Gift cards come in two flavors: those you'll use and those you won't. If a gift card isn't right for you, ask yourself who might be a better fit, says Tracy Tilson, founder of UseYourGiftCard.com and the creator of National Use Your Gift Card Day.

You could regift it to a friend or neighbor, donate to a charity or hand it to a first responder as a thank you for their hard work during the pandemic, Tilson suggests.

"It's a good way to create some goodwill if you're not going to use them," Tilson says.

You might sell the card to someone you know or trade it for one of their unwanted cards. Gift cards can be sold or swapped online but scams abound. Buyers may ask you to read off the card numbers to "ensure the card is legit" and disappear with the card's value once you do. Or the card you get in a swap may be phony or already used. Avoid private-party sales to strangers, such as

those on Craigslist or Facebook. If you want to use an online site, make sure it has a post-transaction money-back guarantee.

SET REMINDERS FOR THE CARDS YOU WANT TO USE

If you're planning to use a card, employ your phone and a calendar to help keep track, says Shelley Hunter, spokeswoman for GiftCards.com, an online provider of gift cards. Hunter keeps a running list of her cards on her phone and makes a note on her calendar when she plans to use one. "On Saturday, I'm probably going to go out to lunch with my boys, so I will put on the calendar, 'Lunch with boys. Use Panera gift card,'" Hunter says. Even if you don't have a specific plan for a card, consider putting a "use by" date on your calendar so you don't forget it, Tilson says.

Hunter also recommends treating cards like cash. If you got a \$20 bill as a gift, you'd probably put it into your wallet right away, Hunter notes. Consider do-

ing the same with gift cards you plan to use.

"I put them next to the debit or credit card that I use most often," she says.

Tilson agrees. If she puts gift cards elsewhere in her wallet or purse, "I forget about them."

KEEP EXPIRATION RULES IN MIND

How much time you have to use your gift cards may depend on where you live and the type of card.

Under the federal Credit Card Accountability Responsibility and Disclosure Act of 2009, gift cards can't expire for five years although issuers can charge inactivity fees if the card hasn't been used within 12 months.

Some states have additional rules. Where I live in California, store gift certificates and gift cards can't expire. Inactivity fees are mostly forbidden and balances below \$10 can be redeemed for cash. The law doesn't apply to general-use gift cards, however, if the expiration date is printed on the card. (General-



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use cards include gift cards issued by Visa, Mastercard, Discover and American Express that can be used wherever those brands are accepted.)

You can find other states' rules by searching the National Conference of State Legislatures' site for "gift card."

In general, though, the quicker you use your cards, the better. You're less likely to forget about them and more likely to enjoy the value the giver wanted you to have. □

Pope on COVID vaccines says health care a 'moral obligation'



Associated Press

By **NICOLE WINFIELD** **Associated Press**

ROME (AP) — Pope Francis suggested Monday that getting vaccinated against the coronavirus was a "moral obligation" and denounced how people had been swayed by "baseless information" to refuse one of the most effective measures to save lives during the pandemic.

Francis used some of his strongest words yet calling for people to get vac-

inated in a speech to ambassadors accredited to the Holy See, an annual event in which he sets out the Vatican's foreign policy goals for the year.

Francis, 85, has generally shied away from speaking about vaccination as a "moral obligation," though his COVID-19 advisors have referred to it as a "moral responsibility." Rather, Francis has termed vaccination as "an act of love" and that refusing to get inoculated

was "suicidal." On Monday he went a step further, saying that individuals had a responsibility to care for themselves "and this translates into respect for the health of those around us. Health care is a moral obligation," he asserted. He lamented that, increasingly, ideological divides were discouraging people from getting vaccinated. "Frequently people let themselves be influenced by the ideology of the moment, often bolstered by baseless information or poorly documented facts," he said, calling for the adoption of a "reality therapy" to correct this distortion. "Vaccines are not a magical means of healing, yet surely they represent, in addition to other treatments that need to be developed, the most reasonable solution for the prevention of the disease," he added. Some Catholics, including some conservative U.S. bishops and

cardinals, have claimed that vaccines based on research that used cells derived from aborted fetuses were immoral, and have refused to get the jabs.

The Vatican's doctrine office, however, has said it is "morally acceptable" for Catholics to receive COVID-19 vaccines based on research that used cells derived from aborted fetuses. Francis and Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI have been fully vaccinated with Pfizer-BioNTech shots.

Francis repeated his call for universal access to the shots, particularly in the parts of the world with low vaccination rates, and called for revisions to patent rules so that poorer countries can develop their own vaccines.

"It is appropriate that institutions such as the World Trade Organization and the World Intellectual Property Organization adapt their legal instruments lest

monopolistic rules constitute further obstacles to production and to an organized and consistent access to health care on a global level," he said.

Francis delivered the speech to a much smaller group of diplomats than usual, and skipped the part of the audience that ambassadors relish: a chance to greet him personally and exchange a few words. The restrictions were clearly a response to the exponential rise in coronavirus cases in Italy. On other topics, Francis lamented Syria's devastation, calling for "political and constitutional reforms" so the country can be "reborn," and urged that any sanctions avoid targeting civilians. He didn't single Russia out by name but called for "acceptable and lasting solutions" for Ukraine and the southern Caucasus inspired by "reciprocal trust and readiness to engage in calm discussion." □

Bobsled preview: Humphries, Meyers Taylor lead US hopes

By **TIM REYNOLDS**
AP Sports Writer

At the last Olympics, Kaillie Humphries was Canadian and women's bobsledders had just one chance to win medals.

A few things have changed over the last four years. Humphries holds American citizenship now, and she'll be competing in two events — not one — at the Beijing Games in February, with this set to become the first Olympics where monobob is included in the medal program. And the three-time medalist is looking for more.

"The sole focus is on February," Humphries said.

With good reason. Olympic gold is what drives her, and most bobsledders, like nothing else. The longtime star of the Canadian bobsled team began sliding for the Americans three seasons ago, needing a lengthy legal and administrative fight just to get a U.S. passport in time to compete in these Olympics. She got it, with just a few weeks to spare. Now, she has a chance at double medals. The women have their customary two-person event, plus monobob — just a driver in the sled, no brakeman — is a huge chance for some of the best pilots in the world to enhance their Olympic legacies. Humphries is the reigning world champion



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and fellow U.S. driver Elana Meyers Taylor has been arguably the best monobobber in the world this season. But here's more proof that it's all about Beijing: Meyers Taylor — also a three-time Olympic medalist, one of those coming as a push athlete — skipped a monobob race a few weeks ago, thinking more about long-term goals than short-term gains.

"I really need to preserve my body, and I know I have to take it easy sometimes," Meyers Taylor said.

It'll be the usual suspects who enter the Beijing

Games as medal favorites. The U.S. could get as many as four of the six medals awarded in women's races. And on the men's side, it's all about Germany — which means it's all about Francesco Friedrich.

The double-gold winner from the Pyeongchang Games — he shared the two-man title there with Canada's Justin Kripps — is the overwhelming favorite to win double gold again at these Olympics. Nobody has ever swept both men's events in back-to-back Olympics; Germany's Andre Lange came closest,

winning four-man golds in 2002 and 2006, plus two-man golds in 2006 and 2010.

His dominance has been unmatched in the sport's history: seven consecutive world championships in two-man, four consecutive world championships in four-man, and since the Pyeongchang Games he's won an absurd 82% of his international races.

A three-week training stint in China this fall showed Friedrich what he has to do there to be successful in February, and his confidence is high.

"We feel great," Friedrich said. "We had a good time there, three weeks. We know the track. We only have to learn the Olympic village. But I think it's all in good shape for the Olympics."

LOOKING FOR SIX

The U.S. bobsled team is seeking to win a medal for the sixth consecutive Olympics, and frankly, it'd be a complete disaster if the Americans didn't get at least one. A medal in six games in a row would tie the longest such streak in U.S. Olympic bobsled history; it also happened in six straight from 1928 through 1956. Switzerland has the record for medal streaks in bobsled, winning one in 11 consecutive Olympics from 1968 through 2006.

MIND THE GAP

Britain has only five Olympic bobsled medals and hasn't had an on-track medal celebration since 1998; the four-man medal won in 2014 was awarded years later after the British were promoted to bronze following the disqualification of Russian sleds in a doping scandal. But Brad Hall — Bobsleigh Brad, he goes by on social media — has been a contender just about every week in World Cup races this season, and he looks like a legit challenger in both two- and four-man for Beijing. □

From north to east, NFL firings begin on day after finales

By **BARRY WILNER**
AP Pro Football Writer

From the NFC North to the AFC East, the firings began almost immediately after the NFL's first 17-game season concluded.

The Vikings fired coach Mike Zimmer and general manager Rick Spielman on Monday following an 8-9 season. Division rival Chicago parted with coach Matt Nagy and GM Ryan Pace after going 6-11.

And in a relative surprise, Miami dismissed coach Brian Flores, whose Dolphins went 9-8, including a sweep of archrival New

England.

Indeed, the career coaching records for each total 130-112-1.

Yet, while in South Florida the Dolphins seemed to be overachievers with a modest roster, both the Vikings and Bears were major disappointments this season. As were the New York Giants (4-13), and general manager Dave Gettleman retired Monday, though he likely would have been fired otherwise.

One major problem for Minnesota and Chicago resides in neighboring Wisconsin: the Packers. While

Green Bay is an NFL power and perennial championship contender, the Vikings and Bears have done more teasing than triumphant.

"We are determined to have sustained success and bring Vikings fans the Super Bowl championships they expect and deserve," owners Zygi and Mark Wilf said in their statement after letting go of Zimmer and Spielman.

Zimmer was 7-8-1 against the Packers, which isn't bad considering how Green Bay has performed in recent years. It was simply not close to good enough



Associated Press

in that division.

The Bears under Nagy were 1-7 against the Pack in the longest running rivalry in pro football. Nagy, the 2018 Coach of the Year, simply was following the path of his predecessors: Chicago's past six head coaches have had a losing record

against Green Bay.

There also has been no evident progress at quarterback in Chicago, and the defense has taken a step backward. The 2018 Khalil Mack trade, Pace's biggest move with the Bears, began well and now looks unproductive. □

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Tomlin's leadership guides Steelers to unlikely playoff spot

By **WILL GRAVES**
AP Sports Writer
PITTSBURGH (AP)—

It sounded like wishful thinking at best. A throwaway line at worst for a coach bracing himself for imminent disappointment.

"I'm capable of talking myself in(to) anything," Mike Tomlin said last week when asked about the seemingly unlikely series of events the Pittsburgh Steelers needed to unfold if they wanted to navigate their way to the playoffs. Yet what could have come off as naive or trite instead provided a glimpse into Tomlin's relentless tunnel vision, the kind that's helped him guide the Steelers (9-7-1) to their 10th — and by far most unlikely — postseason appearance during his 15 years on the sideline. Over the past four months, through injuries, uncharacteristically lopsided losses and a series of wins whose only saving grace was the final score — oh and that comical tie with Detroit — Tomlin's message has not changed.

Down 29 at the half to Minnesota? Keep going.

Steamrolled by Cincinnati ... twice? Keep going. Destroyed in Kansas City the day after Christmas? Keep going.

By comparison, needing a win in Baltimore in the regular-season finale, a loss by Indianapolis to a team so bad fans came dressed up as clowns and the game between the Chargers and Raiders to not end in a tie — which it nearly did — seemed doable.

"Whether we were winning or losing, whether we were up or down, it was always the same attitude, and that's hard to find," said wide receiver Ray-Ray McCloud, who has stunningly morphed from a punt return specialist to one of quarterback Ben Roethlisberger's favorite options. "You never change your ways. You know you've just got to win."

Something the Steelers somehow managed to do nine times this season — the 15th straight non-losing season under Tomlin's watch, the longest by a coach to start a career in NFL history — despite finishing in the

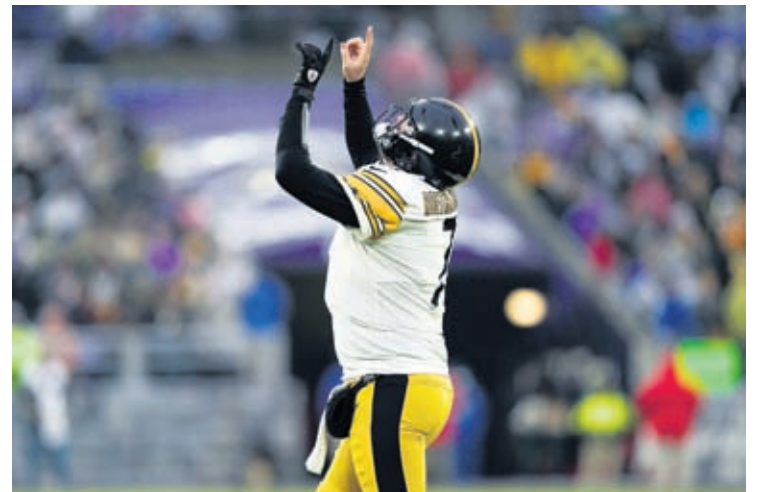
bottom third of the league in every major statistical category. Well, except for the most important one.

"I do think it shows something about this team, that you can continue to fight and never give up," Roethlisberger said.

It's a mindset that's served as the backbone of Tomlin's philosophy since the day he replaced Bill Cowher in January 2007. He was 34 at the time and largely anonymous. Going on two decades later, Tomlin's steadfastness keeps his team calm and tends to rattle opposing coaches. How else to explain Cleveland and Tennessee — two of the best running teams in the NFL — turning to their quarterbacks instead when facing the worst rush defense in the league?

The Titans turned it over four times and lost despite allowing just 168 yards. The Browns seemed to forget they had Nick Chubb and tried to let Baker Mayfield beat the Steelers instead. It didn't work either time.

If any of those three games go the other way, Pitts-



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burgh's season is over. If the Detroit Lions have their regular kicker instead of the backup punter attempting an overtime field goal during that strange tie in November, Pittsburgh's season is over. If Baltimore coach John Harbaugh opts for overtime instead of going for 2 and the win during the rivals' first meeting in December, Pittsburgh's season is (maybe) over.

It's not. The Steelers, with their minus-55 point differential, an offense that sputters far more often than it shines, a defense that has T.J. Watt, Cam Heyward, Minkah Fitzpatrick and

seemingly not much else, play on. Their reward is a trip to visit the Chiefs (12-5) on Sunday, the same place where Kansas City crushed Pittsburgh 36-10 three weeks ago, a victory that seemed to highlight the chasm between the two clubs.

Despite being listed as 13-point underdogs the Steelers — stunningly — have a chance to bridge that gap thanks in large part to a coach who seems to have a mystical ability to speak things into existence. "We've got a lot of warts," Tomlin said. "But we're here." □



Associated Press

By **DAVE SKRETTA**
AP Sports Writer

The Kansas City Chiefs did what they had to Saturday, beating the Broncos on the road to finish up the regular season. Too bad

the Titans did what they had to Sunday, too. So rather than have the No. 1 seed and a first-round bye, the Chiefs will face seventh-seeded Pittsburgh on Sunday night in the wild-

Chiefs sluggishly enter playoffs with Pittsburgh up first

card round at Arrowhead Stadium. It will be a rematch of a game from just a few weeks ago, when the Chiefs led 23-0 by halftime and rolled through the second half in a 36-10 romp. "When you get a first-round bye, it's more of a win because you're getting past a round in the playoffs, which are never easy," Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes said. "But we're ready to go wherever against whoever. We just go in with the mindset of we're going to

have to play each-and-every week to get back to that Super Bowl." The Chiefs didn't exactly cruise into the playoffs, though. The hot streak they were on when they played Pittsburgh ended the next week, when the Bengals not only ended their eight-game win streak but also knocked them from first place in the conference. The Chiefs struggled to contain the Denver ground game, gave up too many long runs to fill-in Broncos quarterback Drew

Lock and trailed on the scoreboard until the fourth quarter. That's when linebacker Nick Bolton bailed them out by taking a fumble 86 yards for a score that finally gave Kansas City the lead for good in a 28-24 win. "That was a big play. That was a big-time play by a big-time player," Mahomes said. "That's why we brought Melvin (Ingram III) over here: to make plays like that. He made a big play for us, Nick picked it up and got to the end zone." □